

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claims 1-6 without prejudice to or disclaimer of their subject matter. Please ADD claims 7-14, as follows.

7. (New) An image heating apparatus comprising:
 - an endless belt;
 - a first rotatable member for rotatably supporting said belt, said first rotatable member having an elastic layer with an outer diameter which is larger in a longitudinal central portion than in opposite longitudinal end portions;
 - a second rotatable member disposed opposed to said first rotatable member with said belt therebetween, wherein said second rotatable member cooperates with said first rotatable member to form a nip in which an image on a recording material is heated;
 - urging means for urging, toward said second rotatable member, opposite ends of a rotation shaft of said first rotatable member,
 - wherein said nip has a width which is larger in the opposite longitudinal end portions than in the longitudinal central portion.

8. (New) An apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said first rotatable member has a hardness which is lower than that of said second rotatable member.

9. (New) An apparatus according to claim 7, wherein an outer diameter of said second rotatable member in the opposite longitudinal end portions is substantially equal to that in the longitudinal central portion.

10. (New) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein an outer diameter of said second rotatable member in the opposite longitudinal end portions is substantially equal to that in the longitudinal central portion.

11. (New) An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said second rotatable member has a core metal and an elastic layer thereon, and wherein an outer diameter of said core metal in the opposite longitudinal end portions is substantially equal to that in the longitudinal central portion.

12. (New) An apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said second rotatable member has a core metal and an elastic layer thereon, and wherein an outer diameter of said core metal in the opposite longitudinal end portions is substantially equal to that in the longitudinal central portion.

13. (New) An apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said elastic layer comprises rubber.

14. (New) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said elastic layer comprises rubber.